

Record of Interview



Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction

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Donor coordination 2003-2005

I did not have a great deal of visibility or engagement on coordination of development aid. But the criticism of "Accelerating Success" not being coordinated well with the international community (IC) – that criticism is overwrought, given what was then very limited capacity of the IC. NATO was a bit player, ISAF was a very small organization. The central player that linked the international effort (which was so varied, it was like the Star Wars bar scene) was, on the diplomatic side, the US Ambassador. A distant second was the UN SRSG. But once Zal arrived [November 2003] he effectively superseded the SRSG.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Overall there was a good amount of coordination, but it was all unconventional. I suppose overall there was not very much coordination with the IC, but quite a bit with the Afghans. It was a very different environment, the embassy had just opened.

Afghanistan Reconstruction Group

The Afghanistan Reconstruction Group is an example of something that worked extremely well – it was very senior corporate executives from the private sector (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) in Afg for 6-12, usually 12, months. Usually advising Afghan ministries. It was a brilliant innovation. These were very selfless people, did lots of work, lots of advice to Afghan government. I'm an admirer of them and of the organization. The more we got stultified and stovepiped, that kind of thing went away.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Khalilzad's role; EIPG

One of great advantages of Zal as Ambassador was not having to deal with the typical bureaucratic constraints. He had direct access to President Bush, Cheney, Rice. You can see that in the funding levels that did not continue after Zal left – the funding dropped off. He was there Nov 2003 – June 2005; I was there Oct 2003 – May 2005.

Zal had no one who could do strategic thinking for him. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

PRT Executive Steering Committee

In terms of organizations coordinating with the outside, we had the PRT Executive Steering Committee. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

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All Ambassadors or senior reps. It became a clearing house for strategy and planning on Afghanistan – security and development sectors. One of the key questions was, where will the next PRT be? Who will head it? (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

We decided to put more in the South and East, the “contested zone,” where most worried about Taliban returning. We sought to strengthen the Afghan government’s hand. Questions that nations had to ask included, How big? What type? What security environment are we willing to operate in? It was really interesting to see nations deciding what command & control they wanted to come under – NATO or US? At first NATO couldn’t provide the logistics support (resupply, medevac, close air support) that the US did. You had this huge advantage with being under US command. I don’t know of any countries that chose against US C&C. By 2005 NATO did have capability to provide the US level of support. Then by Jan 2007 US and NATO were one command.

Corruption

I’m not so sure we should have done it any differently. These “warlords” equaled the ground force that just defeated the Taliban and al Qaeda – on the ground with US SOF [I’m unsure whether he specified this, but I think said something like “we were working/fighting with these guys”] – these weren’t just random bandits running around. Our goal was demobilization and demilitarization, and to integrate the warlords through the political process. If considered broadly, I think it was a success. By spring 2005 ___[demilitarization process was successful?]. I think if we hadn’t pursued that, the alternative was Iraq in 2003 and 2004 – everyone for themselves. The idea of the warlords, if you want to call them that, forming an [armed] opposition was real.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Development assistance – strategy

USAID development funds didn’t seem to support any broader strategic goal. I wasn’t personally involved with it, but one thing that was strategic was building the Ring Road. A lot of projects elsewhere were not tied to any strategic outcome.

Personnel/staffing

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At the strategic level, the single most disabling factor was our failure to maintain long-term leadership at the Embassy and at our military commands. We should have someone in the job for 3 to 5 years for continuity. We blew that completely, and we don't talk about it much. We did better on this front in Vietnam. We also need to fuse military and civilian leadership in their pre-deployment training, and align their tours.

Follow-up Items

None.